

5. Description of a New Snake of the Genus *Aspidura*
from Ceylon. By WILLIAM FERGUSON, F.L.S.

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ASPIDURA GUENTHERI, sp. nov.

The postfrontal enters the orbit, and is in contact with the second and third labials, preorbital well developed and elongate, the postfrontal separating it considerably from the superciliary; the upper postorbital is much larger than the lower one, and is in contact with the superciliary, occipital, and first temporal; six upper labials. Two pairs of chin-shields, the anterior large, about thrice as long as broad; the posterior small, scale-like; six (seven) lower labials, the four anterior of which are in contact with the anterior chin-shields. Scales in 17 rows, smooth, hexagonal, not elongate, and but very slightly imbricate; the first row next ventrals broadest, and the next two rows broader than the others, the length not much greater than the breadth. Ventral shields 104-118, subcaudal 18-26. The circumference of the body is about one tenth of the total length, the length of the tail one eighth. Snout in front of eyes sharply pointed compared with *A. brachyorrhos*. The anterior frontal extends back between the postfrontals further than the anterior ends of the third labials, whilst in *A. brachyorrhos* it is obtuse, and does not extend beyond the second labials. Colour, a glossy shining metallic dark olive-brown above, the belly slate-coloured. Three rows of small indistinct darker spots along the back—one row dorsal, and the others on the fourth or fifth row of scales from the ventrals, each darker spot occupying about one scale, and generally whitish spots on some of the other scales near them. Generally a white collar immediately behind the head, often broader below, and sometimes extending in a Λ from the neck along the upper part of the head, covering portions of the occipitals, and separated by a narrow dark line; often a white spot from upper labials below and behind the eye. These white markings on neck and head are more or less present on all my specimens; but occasionally they are indistinct above, and absent on the lower part of the head. Total length of the longest specimen seen 6.2 inches, the length of tail about 0.7 inch.

Hab. Ceylon.

Dr. Günther having expressed his doubts as to whether two specimens of this species sent to him by me in March 1872 were not the young of *A. brachyorrhos*, and having asked me to reexamine my specimens, I am now in a position to say that *A. guentheri* cannot possibly be confounded with any of the other three species known. *A. copii* is a large stout snake, and found hitherto only in the district of Dickoga, at an elevation of about 4000-5000 feet. *A. trachyprocta* is also an alpine snake, and never found, that I am aware of, except in the mountains of Ceylon. *A. guentheri* cannot be confounded with either of these; and it has scarcely any specific character in common with *A. brachyorrhos*, excepting that both have seventeen

rows of scales round the body. *A. brachyorrhos* has never, as far as I know, been found near the coast of Ceylon, whilst *A. guentheri* occurs close to the coast, and never far from it. *A. guentheri* is not the young of any other species of *Aspidura*; because I have seen about one hundred specimens, and I have never seen one longer than about 6 inches, whilst amongst them were several young ones from $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 inches in length, retaining all the specific characters and coloration of their parents. A young *A. brachyorrhos*, the size of *A. guentheri* does not in any way differ from its parents or approach *A. guentheri*. *A. guentheri* differs from *A. brachyorrhos* markedly in the following respects—its small size and dark colour, in the number of its ventrals and subcaudals, its hexagonal-shaped and non-imbricate scales, its pointed snout, the extension backwards of the anterior frontal between the postfrontals, the separation of the preocular from the superciliary by the postfrontal, which runs into the eye, the larger size of the upper postorbital, and the scales it is in contact with. In twelve specimens of *A. guentheri* examined by me, the average number of ventrals was $109\frac{3}{4}$, subcaudals $20\frac{2}{3}$, totals $130\frac{5}{12}$, total length 5.83 inches, length of tail 0.72 inch. The lowest number of ventrals, 104, has the largest number of subcaudals = 26.

Colombo, Ceylon.
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